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ABSTRACT

Thirty documents selected from the literature on educational change, social systems, and management and organization were searched for statements considered relevant to collaboration and coordination between organizational units. These statements, either quoted or paraphrased, are listed in this report along with their sources. The statements are clustered according to their pertinence to eight topic areas: planning, commitment, characteristics of participating organizations, power and influence, interdependence, tasks, communication, and innovation. (PGD)

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HIGHLIGHTS:

SELECTED STATEMENTS FROM THE LITERATURE ON

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

Jane Roberts

This set of materials consists of quotations and paraphrases considered relevant to collaboration and coordination. Thirty documents were selected from literature on educational change, management and organization, and social systems. Key statements from these documents were noted. The resulting collection of quotations was then analyzed (using a phenomonological approach) to determine emergent categories. Within each category, statements were clustered and sequenced, in order to present ideas systematically. The categories are:

- Planning
- Commitment
- Characteristics of Participating Organizations*
- Power and Influence
- Independence
- Tasks
- Communication
- Innovation

The information is presented in this form to allow readers to draw their own conclusions, to stimulate ideas for action, and to indicate the various perspectives of the writers cited.

*An organization may be a complete company or agency, or may be a unit or division of a company. Collaboration may occur as an interagency effort or between organizational units of a single agency.

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Planning

- The assumptions stimulating collaboration or coordination are that shared resources and cooperative efforts will produce a more forceful impact, especially when participants have a common interest in a significant goal.

  (Rubin, 1980)

- The increased intensification of needs for greater resources makes such an alternative increasingly attractive.

  (Aiken & Nage, 1968)

- The time must be right; there must be a real need and readiness to take action.

  (NWREL, 1980)

- In initiating planning/negotiation for collaboration, there must be...
  - a clear statement of intent (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977)
  - careful planning and organization (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - anticipation of barriers (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977)
  - establishment of mutually acceptable ground rules (Congreve, 1969)
  - identification of common group interests (Rubin, 1980)
  - goal congruence between the new collaborative organization and the member components or agencies (Rubin, 1980)

- In determining the area of collaborative activity, participants should:
  - mutually develop the plan (Congreve, 1969)
  - have realistic parameters (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977)
  - deal with real issues (Congreve, 1969)
  - focus on a specific project (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - determine a narrow focus, with few objectives, leading to accomplishments that bring about clear improvements and which provide products or services that would otherwise be unavailable

    (Rubin, 1980)

- In planning for implementation, the collaborators should:
  - make aims widely understood (Rubin, 1980)
  - ensure that more is not promised than can be delivered

    (Thompson, 1980)
  - develop activities for meaningful participation (Congreve, 1969)

- The basic approach of interactive planning is to "make it happen." It is the design of a desirable future and the invention of ways to bring it about...it focuses on all three aspects of an organization -- the parts (but not separately), the whole, and the environment. Instead of planning away from a current state we start planning toward a desired state.

  (Ackoff, 1977)

planning...2

- Planning should be continuous or cyclical so that unanticipated problems can be dealt with as they arise, and improvements or modifications can be made (an adaptive planning approach).
  (Firestone, 1977: Heathers, et al., 1977; Moore et al., 1977)

✓ • Three barriers to successful planning are: (1) the short-term perspective of school staff, (2) organizational weakness of school planners, and (3) failure of the planning process to culminate at a time when decisions can be made. ?
  (Goodwin, 1977)

✓ • Planning for incremental implementation reduces risks.
  (Goodwin, 1977; Heathers et al., 1977)

Commitment

- Organizations do not move flexibly to maximize efficiency, but change slowly to minimize uncertainty.

  (Murphy, 1973)

- ...reduction of agency slack...executives tend to be chary of any new involvement carrying fringe rather than primary benefits.

  (Rubin, 1980)

- Characteristics of successful collaboration include:
  - investment of participants (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - commitment beyond individual tasks (Pasmore et al., 1978)
  - commitment of individuals to the task at hand and understanding of its relation to the organizational mission (Crandall, 1977)
  - commitment to the collaborative organization (Pasmore et al., 1978)
  - priority status for the project (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977)

- The organizational management and the operational staff must both be persuaded that collaboration is advantageous, so operating conditions include: cadre of highly committed people to contribute time and energy; sustained support of powerful individuals; steps taken to establish credibility; motivation of active interest.

  (Rubin, 1980)

- Encourage commitment by:
  - establishing an initial success (Congreve, 1969)
  - giving voice to advocates in the organization supporting collaboration (Crandall, 1977)
  - organizing advocacy campaigns, publicizing exemplary or innovative practices relating to the alliance's goals, and working at achieving a positive image (Rubin, 1980)

- The organization should provide clear rewards for individuals involved in the collaborative effort.

  (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977; Rubin, 1980)

- The Rand study indicates that effective support -- from district staff and school principals -- includes moral support illustrated by acceptance and approval of the project, reinforcement and enthusiasm toward teachers putting classroom improvements into practice, and establishment of good working relationships between and among individuals and groups involved in the project. Practical support is illustrated by real commitment of resources, provisions for training and on-going assistance, and classroom visits followed by constructive feedback.

  (See Berman et al., 1977)

Characteristics of Participating Organizations

- Organizations rarely collaborate as total entities
  (Rubin, 1980)

- There is a greater degree of complexity, i.e., more occupational diversity and greater professionalism of staff in those organizations with the most joint programs
  (Aiken & Hage, 1968)

- Organizations planning to become involved in collaborating need to have: an organizational role definition, flexibility, a focus on external issues, and a level of stability which encourages a freedom to risk
  (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977; Crandall, 1977)

- In staffing a collaborative project, the organization should assign individuals who:
  - are competent, have strong negotiating skills, and who are not already suffering role overload
    (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977)
  - have a reservior of personal energy to sustain progress during setbacks and conflicts, and who have a wide repertoire of systematic problem-solving skills (Crandall, 1977)

- An organization with no surplus reserves available could hardly afford joint programs . . . there must be some slack in the resource base . . . before any cooperative venture is likely
  (Aiken & Hage, 1968)

- Failure in collaboration is probable for organizations in which standard operating procedures dominate, role changes are avoided, and customary rituals govern
  (Rubin, 1980)

Power and Influence

- If we are to understand organizations we must understand the nature of power and influence for they are the means by which the people of the organization are linked to its purpose . . . Distinguish between influence (an active process) and the ability to influence, or power (a resource)

  (Handy, 1978)

- Power is a function of the dependence of one party on another. To the extent that power interferes with mutual cooperation it should be redistributed

  (Pasmore, et al., 1978)

- In today's large and complex organizations the effective performance of most managerial jobs require one to be skilled at the acquisition and use of power

  (Kotter, 1977)

- Someone must take the initiative to ensure that members are brought together, that collegial relationships are formed, that information is exchanged, and so forth . . . The strong leader in this instance will behave as an idea broker and consultant rather than a source of firm and final decisions

  (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

- The high autonomy need of professional educators interferes with effective collaboration and innovation, as does the relatively high level of independence in performing the work

  (Derr, 1976)

- Many groups will fight integration because it may mean a loss of organizational autonomy and program visibility

  (Kelty, 1976)

- Suggestions that they share their sacred domains with other groups not only evoke noncooperation, but outright combativeness

  (Rubin, 1980)

- Realistic administrators may insist on dealing with persons (from another agency) of their own rank

  (Litwak, 1970)

- If effective collaboration is to occur . . .
  - the organization needs to be socio-educational rather than bureaucratic (Trist, 1978)
  - competent and effective leadership is necessary (Rath & Hagans, 1978; Gross & Mojkowski, 1977)
  - the concept of control should change from supervision to boundary maintenance (Trist, 1978)

STATE PROGRAM

power and influence...2

- Coordination is inhibited when there is a lack of strong leadership, and when those involved have insufficient authority to influence decisions and actions

  (Rath & Nagans, 1978)

- Collaboration calls for individuals and groups to share mutually in the decision making process and to negotiate solutions to issues of mutual concern

  (Rath & Hagns, 1978)

- Decisions should be made by consensus, not coercion

  (Thompson, 1980)

- Coercion and dominance are barriers to collaboration

  (Trist, 1978)

- Voluntary involvement should be elicited when possible

  (Rubin, 1980)

- Propositions for collaboration include: effective advisory groups are crucial; actions cannot be imposed from the top down; there must be a recognition that local needs are being met.

  (NWREL, 1980)

- Two characteristics for collaborative projects are: governing structure has egalitarian controls; clients served participate in planning

  (Rubin, 1980)

- Failure to establish operating procedures that ensure equal power and participation will inhibit collaboration

  (Thompson, 1980)

- Characteristics of effective collaboration include: each party's decision to become involved in the joint venture results from choice; all parties have an equal stake in activities, usually involving contributions of equal amounts of money, time and effort; all have equal stake in consequences (good or ill)

  (Rath & Hagans, 1978)

- Leadership within action sets will be assumed by the most powerful or influential organization, and the greater the concentration of power in the hands of one organization's authorities, the easier the action set coordination will be

  (Aldrich, 1979)

Interdependence

- When effective collaboration occurs, members act on the following assumptions:
  - participants share resources (Rubin, 1980)
  - each is dependent on other(s) for accomplishment of work that each alone could not accomplish (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - there is a willingness to align own purposes with those of others, and to negotiate mutually acceptable compromises (Trist, 1978)
  - there is a common understanding of roles and responsibilities (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - mutual adaptations in a number of different areas will become necessary (Aiken & Hage, 1968)
  - there are: 1) active working partnerships among individuals and organizations; 2) shared responsibility and authority for policy making; equal investment and benefits for participants; 4) common understanding of expectations, responsibilities and constraints; 5) interdependence in carrying out activities. (Thompson, 1980)

- As implementation of the collaborative effort gets underway the following may become apparent:
  - organizations attempt to maximize their gains and minimize their losses ... they want to lose as little power and autonomy as possible in their exchange for other resources (Aiken & Hage, 1968)
  - the key elements are equity and dependability: members experience balanced outcomes in terms of reward for effort, depend on one another to provide goods and services required to fulfill the contract on a regular basis (Pasmore et al., 1978)
  - political conflicts over interorganizational and intraorganizational "turf" may develop (Rubin, 1980)
  - leaders sacrifice a small amount of autonomy for gains in staff, funds, etc. (Aiken & Hage, 1968)
  - cooperation = exchange. If exchange takes place and if agreements reached are perceived to be equitable, a cooperative system will develop (Pasmore et al., 1978)
  - some groups may be unwilling to share in decision making (and the related responsibility) (Rath & Hagans, 1978)
  - imbalance results in the more dependable group demanding greater rewards or offering less effort than the reliable group (Pasmore et al., 1978)

Tasks

- Collaboration requires work restructuring, continual task redefinition

  (Pasmore et al., 1978; Rubin, 1980; Trist, 1978)

- A serious barrier is the difficulty of coordination when tasks are not clearly prescribed (and they cannot be in the early stages)

  (Pasmore et al., 1978)

- Collaboration works most easily when tasks are straightforward

  (Crandall, 1977)

- When collaboration is effective, there is a common understanding of expectations of what each is to do, including knowledge of constraints under which each is working

  (Rath & Pagano, 1978)

- There should be careful sequencing of tasks and specific division of labor

  (Gross & Mojkowski, 1977)

- Attempting tasks that will substantially reduce the independence or visibility of any single organization will increase resistance by participants.

  (Trist, 1978)

- Coordination efforts require concentration on the contributive nature of tasks.

  (Pasmore et al., 1978)

Communication

- More highly differentiated organizations, which are characterized by decentralization and autonomy between departments, require greater efforts and a larger number of formal mechanisms to achieve integration

  (Lawrence Lorsch, 1967)

- The dispersed client-centered organization appears to require an organizational structure that maximizes the flow of information between the various members rather than relying on rules and standard procedures

  (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

- In collaborative efforts, communication should emphasize information sharing rather than direction giving and strive for a network structure of control

  (Pasmore et al., 1978)

- It would appear that it is more important for the manager to get information quickly and efficiently than than to get it formally

  (Mintzberg, 1973)

- Social networks are extremely important in the transmission of information

  (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

- The support and influence of peers might be of equal or greater importance than communication with a supervisor

  (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

- Encouragement of lateral communication will reduce the burden on supervisors and expand the problem-solving resources available to the organization

  (Louis & Sieber, 1979; Pasmore, et al., 1978)

- While informal communication is very important, it is also essential to maintain formal structures to promote collegial decision making and exchange of information. Where there are few or no formal structures that promote collegial decision making and exchange of information, the informal structures will become attenuated or weakened

  (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

- A prerequisite of formal rationalization is effective communication, a condition that cannot be taken for granted in a dispersed organization

  (Louis & Sieber, 1979)

- Under circumstances of imperfect knowledge, some decisions will undoubtedly be irrational

(Aiken & Nage, 1968)

- When field staff do not communicate with senior managers (for whatever reason) organizational intelligence and decision making may suffer seriously

(Louis & Sieber, 1979)

Innovation

- When coordination or interorganization collaboration is a new area of activity, the research on implementation of innovation is relevant. A syntheses of that research, in terms of the processes to be employed by those involved, results in three clusters of factors: general (which includes the dimensions of resources, focus of change, planning, and support), communication, and training and assistance. Barriers and facilitators are identified in many studies for each cluster of factors (see three related tables).

- In planning and implementing a new effort, such as intergroup coordination, phases of activity are likely to loop, spiral, or run in support of another at the same time. These phases are:

  - Identify/modify constraints/opportunities
  - Mobilize support
  - Participate in planning
  - Develop training and assistance
  - Implement incrementally by topic, site, population, or organizational unit
  - Design and conduct monitoring

  } With provision for appropriate: communication participation motivation

  (Roberts, 1978)

- Evolutionary stages of a collaborative effort are:
  - formulation = determination of common interests, commitment, leadership by "a few dedicated people"
  - maturation = issues of purpose are resolved, policies develop
  - permanence = proven record of success leads to high credibility and long-term success

  (Rubin, 1980)

- People generally accept innovations more readily if they understand them, regard them as relevant to their particular situation, and also help to plan them

  (Morrish, 1976)

Table 11

Processes - General

Facilitators	Barriers
Resource coordination*	Insufficient resources*
Optimal use of time & other resources*	Inefficient use of time*
Resource commitment	Resource rationing
Access to resources*	Unavailable resources*
Flexible/coordinated use of funds	Lack of guaranteed funds*
User need focus*	Mandated change*
School site focus	District focus
External/internal collaboration*	Conflicting external/internal interests*
Reciprocal feedback*	Change in external policies
Consistency of policy, commitment	Inefficient/inflexible external policies
External/internal simulation*	Poor external/internal communication*
Ongoing planning*	Short-term perspective
Goal consistency*	Conceptual confusion
Meaningful goals defined*	Goal ambiguity
Operational objectives structured	Confusing/overly ambitious goals
Planning capability	Lack of planning capability
Agreement on needs/problems*	Conflicting interests
Requirement for task-relevant decisions*	Uncertainty
Mobilization of support*	
- commitment, approval	
- problem solving motivation*	- opportunistic motivation*
- recognition of need*	- stability*
- coalitions built for improvement	- vulnerability*
- use of administrative influence*	- inertia
- community support*	- ineffective community support*
- removal of regulatory obstacles	- "top down" imposition*
- "bottom-up" input	

(Roberts, 1978)

*"strong" items

Table 12

Processes - Communication

Facilitators	Barriers
Participation by all involved*	Cross-level conflict*
Use of informal networks	Impact of rank & status
Interactive decision making*	Teachers' lack of knowledge, skill
Perceived influence in decisions*	Teachers' lack of influence*
Task-relevant decisions*	
Face-to-face communication*	
Sense of "belonging"	
Role clarity*	
Functional leadership	
Democratic leadership	
Use of task and maintenance skills*	
Capability in conflict resolution	

*"strong" items

(Roberts, 1978)

Table 13

Processes - Training and Assistance

Facilitators	Barriers
Use of synergy	
- demonstration*	Role confusion*
- experiential learning*	Role overload*
- psychological reinforcement*	Vulnerability*
- face-to-face communication*	Lack of comprehension*
- quality materials/clear information*	
- concrete activities/assignments*	
- feedback mechanisms*	
- regular/frequent in school meetings*	Isolation*
- cross-school meetings	Early/threatening evaluation
- mutually agreed assessment measures*	Invisibility
- ongoing assessment*	
Use of incentives	
- recognition for accomplishment*	Threat of punishment
- inservice credit*	
- perceived achievement*	
- opportunity for professional growth*	
- increased responsibility*	
- allowance for individual differences	Variability
- allowance for release time	Teachers' lack of time

*"strong" items

(Roberts, 1978)

Collaboration and Coordination:

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